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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 26 August 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I wish to transmit herewith the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) (S/2014/611):

1. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its position, which has been consistent since 2011, namely, that it has marshalled all its resources to meet the pressing need to provide shelter, food and medicine to all civilians who have been affected by crimes committed by armed terrorist groups. It has done so in keeping with its constitutional and moral responsibility towards its citizens and its principled position that the humanitarian situation and its repercussions are a priority for the Syrian State.

2. In that regard, it reaffirms its readiness to continue to cooperate with the United Nations to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all affected Syrian citizens, without discrimination. It is also abides by the letter and spirit of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014), in accordance with the sequence of steps specified in Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) and the understanding reached in the Security Council in that regard and on the basis of respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law, the guiding principles for humanitarian emergency assistance annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/182 and, above all, the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria that was reaffirmed in Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014).

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3. In order to deliver and distribute humanitarian assistance to those who need it across the country, the United Nations and its agencies need to cooperate closely with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. They should reject the conduct of certain United Nations officials, particularly those responsible for humanitarian affairs. Such conduct falls short of the noble humanitarian mission of the United Nations. In particular, certain individuals have sought to violate Syria's sovereignty and undermine the Syrian State. The United Nations should show greater transparency by cooperating with the Syrian Government and providing, in advance, clear, detailed and transparent plans that include information on the number of civilian beneficiaries; how assistance will be delivered to areas in which armed terrorist groups, some of which are included in the United Nations lists of terrorist entities, are active; what will be done to ensure that the assistance is not used to fund such groups; and the names of implementing partners. International non-governmental organizations should conduct their activities in complete transparency and be forthright regarding the amount of assistance they are providing and their sources of funding.

4. There is now a need for the United Nations Secretariat to coordinate with us in all of its policies and approaches in order to comply with the Security Council resolutions on Syria. In particular, Security Council resolution 2170 (2014) recognizes the priority of combating terrorism and terrorist organizations, including Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front and associated groups. The Secretariat should recognize that Syria's statements on counter-terrorism since the start of the events in 2011 and during the Geneva conference were correct. Similarly, anyone who wishes to restore security to the Syrian Arab Republic should recognize that the only way for the international community to combat terrorism is to cooperate closely with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, and that any attempt to weaken the Syrian Arab Army or the Syrian State would play into the hands of the terrorists.

In order to reach a political solution in Syria, it is essential to recognize the aspirations of the Syrian people as expressed in the multi-candidate presidential elections held within and beyond Syria in June and July 2014. The elections were monitored by parliamentarians from around the world and by media outlets from over 40 countries.

5. The Syrian Arab Republic again stresses that, when distributing humanitarian assistance, the United Nations and its agencies should cooperate with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the primary partner for United Nations relief activities in Syrian territory, and should steer clear of dealing with terrorist organizations that are on United Nations counter-terrorism lists or organizations affiliated with them.

6. Ensuring full implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) requires continued cooperation and coordination between the United Nations, represented by its country team in Syria, and the Syrian Government. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic therefore stresses that the Resident Coordinator must supervise all relief operations, including those involving the importation of assistance across the borders, in coordination with the Syrian Government. Such a course of action would ensure the implementation of the letter and spirit of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), the application of the fundamental principles governing the work of the United Nations in crises and

respect for the sovereignty of Syria, as reaffirmed by the resolutions of the Security Council.

7. The Syrian Government reiterates its keen concern for the security and safety of aid workers affiliated with the United Nations and its agencies. The Syrian Government stresses that it must be informed sufficiently in advance of the importation of humanitarian assistance into its territory so that it may take the necessary measures to ensure the delivery of such assistance and also to ensure the security and safety of humanitarian agency personnel. The report states that the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has provided the Syrian Government with information regarding the content and destination of assistance convoys, but that could not be further from the truth.

8. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic finds it unfortunate that the drafters of the report have introduced political initiatives, both in the report and elsewhere, without discussing them with the Syrian Government.

9. The Syrian Government has previously conveyed its comments to the Resident Coordinator regarding notifications of the loading of humanitarian assistance and its delivery across borders. The notifications do not include adequate information regarding the times when trucks will cross the Syrian border, how many trucks will be used, their numbers, identifying features, itinerary, delivery partners and beneficiaries, and whether the drivers and staff have been granted visas to enter the Syrian Arab Republic. The lack of such information makes it difficult for the Syrian Government to take the necessary measures to guarantee the safety and security of the convoys, given that numerous crossings, particularly Bab al-Salamah and Bab al-Hawa, are currently being used by armed terrorist groups to bring weapons and terrorists into the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. Moreover, that approach is inconsistent with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014).

10. The position of the Syrian Government, as stated above, is confirmed by paragraph 10 of the report. In that paragraph, it is stated that the Bab al-Hawa crossing, which is being used by the United Nations to transport aid into Syria, is under the control of the terrorist Nusrah Front. That position is further confirmed by paragraph 8, which states that the terrorist organization ISIL is attempting to gain control of the Bab al-Salamah crossing. By continuing to use those crossings to import humanitarian assistance, the United Nations is violating its counter-terrorism resolutions, the most recent of which is Security Council resolution 2170 (2014). The outcome is that the humanitarian assistance falls into the hands of the terrorist groups, which exploit it to fund their terrorist activities and further their own interests. The United Nations should therefore strengthen its cooperation with the Syrian Government in order to ensure that the assistance reaches those people in Syrian territory who need it.

11. The Syrian Government has continued to facilitate the efforts of the United Nations to access many hard-to-reach areas and hotspots in Rif Dimashq, the eastern and western parts of the Aleppo countryside, Idlib and the Dar'a countryside. In addition, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian assistance to those areas in the period from 23 July to 22 August.

- With the approval of the Syrian Government, the United Nations, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, again delivered humanitarian assistance to Mu'addamiyah, Rif Dimashq governorate, on 28 July 2014. The

assistance consisted of medical supplies for 4,000 patients suffering from asthma, bronchitis and neurological disorders. In addition, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, acting on the recommendation of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Syria, is in the process of establishing a medical unit and a branch office in Mu'addamiyah. On 14 August 2014, some 4,000 doses of child vaccines for deadly or debilitating diseases were imported.

- The delivery by the United Nations of humanitarian assistance to Mu'addamiyah and what the Organization witnessed inside the city confirms that it is not under siege, and that the 4,000 civilians who remained in the Darayya area have been able to reach Mu'addamiyah, contrary to the claims made in the Secretariat's reports.

- The Syrian Government agreed to the Organization's request to dispatch a humanitarian assistance convoy to Adra al-Ummaliyah and Adra al-Balad on 13 and 14 August 2014. For the third time, the United Nations failed to deliver the assistance, citing numerous excuses for being unable to access the two towns, which have been besieged since December 2013. The United Nations should look into the reasons for that situation and hold itself to account.

- During the period from 25 July to 24 August 2014, the Ministry of Health facilitated the import of 60 cross-border medical consignments from international health organizations. It also facilitated the delivery of 104 medical consignments from international organizations to fulfil the need for medicine and medical supplies in certain governorates, including Hama, Aleppo, Rif Dimashq, Damascus, Qunaytirah and Ladhiqiyah. The Ministry also delivered child vaccines to meet the needs of Raqqah governorate for the next two months.

- In cooperation with the United Nations, and with the approval of the Syrian Government, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered relief supplies during the reporting period to the following areas, many of which are deemed to be hot spots or hard-to-reach areas:

  – Dar'a governorate (western countryside): Kharab al-Shahm, Muzayrib, Tafas, Masakin Jallayn, Saham al-Jawlan, Abidin, Shajarah, Jamlah, Kuwayya, Ma'riyah, Bayt Ara, the displaced persons camp in Yadudah, the migrant camp in Zayzun and its schools. The assistance consisted of 8,000 food parcels and 8,000 health-care parcels. The Government has approved the delivery of medicines to nine primary care centres in Harak, Tafas, Nawa, Jasim and Basr al-Harir, and is coordinating with the World Health Organization (WHO) to arrange the delivery.

    Some 14,500 food parcels and 14,500 health-care parcels were delivered to the eastern countryside of Dar'a governorate from 17 to 19 August 2014, to Nu'aymah and its migrant camp, Umm al-Mayadin, Sayda, Sahwah, Musayfirah, Umm Walad, Samad and its outlying villages, Nasib, Kahil, Jizah, Ghasm, Ghariyat al-Gharbiyah, Ghariyat al-Sharqiyah, Karak and Muta'iyah.

  – Idlib governorate: some 23,000 food parcels, 23,000 parcels of canned food and 23,000 health-care parcels have been delivered to Atimah, Harim, Qah, Janudiyah, Badama, Jisr al-Shughur, Muhambal, Qurqina and camps, Ma'arrah, Khan Shaykhun, Saraqib and its countryside, Ma'arrat Misrin,

Armanaz, Abu al-Duhur, Sarmin and Jabal al-Zawiyah, Salqin, Bastamun, Ariha, Darkush and Idlib city.

- Aleppo governorate: Some 1,150 food parcels have been delivered to the eastern and western countryside of the governorate, specifically to Dayr Hafir, Bab, Maskanah and Jarablus. The Government has approved a request from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to supply the Zarzuri Private Hospital in Aleppo with medicine to meet the needs of the area's inhabitants. Polio vaccinations, routine vaccinations and vaccination supplies have been delivered to Manbij, Afrin, Atarib, Dayr Hafir and Ayn Arab. A total of 57,736 children have been vaccinated.

  The International Committee of the Red Cross has delivered medical supplies to hospitals in the governorate, including those of Manbij and Bab. On 14 August 2014, with Syrian Government approval, it also provided 23 truckloads of food, non-food and health-care supplies to the northern and western countryside of Aleppo, including A'zaz, Kafr Hamrah and Magharat al-Artiq. The supplies were delivered to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in Nubul, Afrin and Urum al-Kubra for distribution.

- Rif Dimashq governorate: On 22 and 23 July 2014, children in the towns of Yalda and Babila were vaccinated by a Health Department team as part of the national vaccination campaign.

- Hasakah governorate: Some 10,000 food parcels and 3,000 canned food rations were delivered in the second airlift. The Government also approved the request of WHO to send a medical shipment consisting of paediatric and diarrhoea medication as part of an emergency shipment of assistance destined for Hasakah to meet the needs of affected Iraqis who had taken refuge in shelters.

- Yarmouk camp: Armed terrorist groups continue to lay siege to the camp from within, thus impeding efforts to bring in humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), with the assistance of the Syrian Government, resumes distribution of assistance whenever the armed terrorist groups stop firing from inside the camp at humanitarian assistance teams. In the reporting period, some 4,938 food parcels and 2,538 health-care parcels were distributed to camp residents. Including those parcels, the number of parcels distributed to camp residents since 30 January 2014 stands at 43,960 food parcels and 6,414 health-care parcels. In the current month, 13 ill persons were transported out of the camp and taken to hospitals in Damascus, bringing the total number of ill persons evacuated from the camp to 4,464. The UNRWA medical team continues to treat patients at the distribution site and provide them with medications. The distribution of assistance will resume in the coming days.

- According to the refugee commission, as at 6 August 2014, some 2,821,827 civilians had received basic (non-food) relief supplies.

12. The Syrian Government will continue to cooperate with the United Nations to address any problems in the procedures that regulate the movement of humanitarian convoys as long as international agencies continue to abide by the fundamental

principles governing humanitarian work, the most important of which is respect for national sovereignty, in order to facilitate the movement of relief supplies and ensure that they reach their destination and beneficiaries as soon as possible. The Government reiterates that the success of such work depends on cooperation and transparency on the part of the United Nations. The Organization should also desist from criticizing the Government's actions without cause. It further reiterates that the humanitarian crisis cannot be addressed simply by distributing assistance or by accusing the Government of not doing enough. Nor can it be resolved by failing to acknowledge the actual impediments to the Organization's humanitarian efforts, the most significant of which are terrorism, the severely underfunded humanitarian assistance response plan for 2014 and the inefficiency and poor coordination that characterizes the work of United Nations humanitarian agencies.

13. With regard to the matter of visas, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to note that, in the reporting period, it granted 31 entry visas for international officials. With those visas, the total number of entry visas granted to United Nations and international officials now stands at more than 800. In that connection, the Government would like to emphasize that the Organization must abide by the conditions for the granting of such visas, including the provision of all information required to obtain an entry visa. This information must also be provided sufficiently in advance, so as to enable the competent authorities to process visa requests. The Government hopes that this matter will be settled through cooperation between Syria and the relevant United Nations organizations.

14. The Syrian Government reiterates it is imperative that relief supplies brought into Syria should conform to the standards of the Ministry of Health of the Syrian Arab Republic and WHO. In addition, assistance that includes farming materials must conform to international standards, in order to ensure the integrity of Syria's agricultural and livestock protection system, and prevent the spread of agricultural diseases. This can be accomplished only through full cooperation with the Government the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. The Secretary-General's report does not reflect accurately the number of Iraqi refugees who have recently entered the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. As at 24 August 2014, the total number of Iraqi refugees who have entered into Hasakah governorate alone stood at 95,000, according to sources at UNHCR.

16. Although it has continued to approve requests made by United Nations and international organizations to import humanitarian assistance via the official border crossings with Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, the Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the Secretary-General's report overlooks the Turkish Government's refusal to allow the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross to import humanitarian assistance via the Nusaybin crossing on the border with Turkey. This refusal necessitated the shipment of those supplies by aircraft from Damascus airport to Qamishli airport, and delayed their delivery to beneficiaries by two months. It should be noted that, up to 23 August 2014, more than 35 flights had been flown.

17. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is surprised that, for political motives, senior United Nations officials have cited arbitrary estimates and inaccurate and undocumented figures on humanitarian needs in Syria in their statements and reports. Such conduct adversely affects the credibility and precision of information related to humanitarian work. This is the case with many of the

reports on the Syrian crisis issued by the United Nations, including the report being discussed. This report cites information taken from unsubstantiated testimony and reports issued by politicized parties, in particular the reports of the special international commission of inquiry for Syria, which are characterized by politicization and lack of objectivity. The Government has previously informed the Resident Coordinator for United Nations activities in Syria that it deplores such irresponsible conduct.

18. The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that, in all its reports, the Secretariat deliberately fails to mention the facilities that the Government provides to United Nations organizations in connection with the delivery of assistance. According to the report, assistance was distributed to 3,660,000 beneficiaries in 13 governorates, an accomplishment that would not have been possible without the cooperation of the Syrian Government. The Government also finds it deplorable that the report fails to note the facilities provided by the Syrian Government to enable the United Nations to deliver assistance to Iraqi refugees in Hasakah governorate. Such conduct by the United Nations adversely affects its relationship with the Syrian Government, and that, in turn, will affect the proper implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165(2014), because of the position taken by Secretariat officials.

19. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the report's passages concerning Aleppo Central Prison are nothing more than false claims made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which deliberately ignored precise, documented information and figures and replaced it with various pieces of false information it received from dubious sources, in order to hold the Syrian Government responsible for the crimes committed by armed terrorist groups against the prisoners and guards when they laid siege to the prison for over a year, starving, surrounding and bombarding the prison's occupants and preventing food and medicine from reaching them.

20. Syria finds it deplorable that the Secretariat continues to insist unconvincingly that it is incapable of verifying whether "foreign fighters" are present in Syria. Such a position contradicts the report, paragraph 12 of which notes that most Western countries have indicated that terrorists who are also their citizens are participating in acts of terrorism in Syria. The Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly affirmed that those States that support terrorism in Syria and the region should take heed of past events and experience and understand that the growing threat represented by the escalation of terrorism will surely transcend the States of the region and spread around the world, including, in particular, to those States that harbour and support terrorists.

21. Syria finds it deplorable that those United Nations officials who are responsible for drafting the above-mentioned report continue to ignore the fact that armed terrorist groups are primarily responsible for the ever-worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria. They insist on addressing the humanitarian situation in Syria in a manner that is selective, biased and politicized and that disregards the guiding principles of United Nations humanitarian assistance. They furthermore insist on using the designation "the armed opposition" for terrorist groups that have been classified by the Security Council as being terrorist entities associated with Al-Qaida. These groups include the Nusrah Front and its allies, as well as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its allies.

22. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic rejects the claims made in the Secretary-General's report that the Syrian armed forces are indiscriminately targeting civilians. The Government affirms that it is its constitutional role and moral duty to protect its citizens from armed terrorist groups and prevent those groups from committing various crimes, including the murder of individuals and mass killings. Those groups have targeted public and private institutions, innocent civilians' property and public facilities with bombings and indiscriminate rocket fire. The Government shall use every means possible to achieve that goal, including by bringing the terrorists before law enforcement officials so that they can be held accountable and punished for their actions. The Government is also earnestly striving to reach a political solution and bring about national reconciliation. This is Syria's national strategy. The success achieved in the old city of Homs is but one example of the fruits of that strategy and was preceded by successes in Rif Dimashq, Aleppo, Hama and other governorates. Another recent example was the reconciliation that was achieved in Qadam, where the Syrian Government's earnest efforts succeeded in restoring security and saving the lives of civilians. Those civilians were able to return to their homes following the success of local reconciliation efforts in areas that had been struck by terrorists.

23. Lastly, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that, in order to resolve the humanitarian crisis that has developed in many parts of Syria, it is necessary to counter and eradicate terrorism and the funding thereof, and rescind unilateral, punitive economic measures. United Nations reports on the humanitarian situation in Syria do not clearly reflect the fact that terrorism has given rise to humanitarian needs and ignore the negative effects that unilateral coercive measures have had on the livelihoods of Syrian civilians; those are measures that have exacerbated human suffering and increased Syrian civilians' humanitarian needs. Indeed, the reports ignore this link despite the fact that it is acknowledged in Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). The lack of attention to this aspect on the part of the Secretariat and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs raises doubts as to the credibility of these reports and those responsible for them. It also impedes, both directly and indirectly, the vital role that the United Nations is expected to play in countering and eradicating terrorism and those who support, fund and arm terrorists.

24. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic welcomes Security Council resolution 2170 (2014) and stands ready to cooperate and coordinate internationally, regionally and bilaterally in the counter-terrorism effort, which must be conducted through the Syrian Government, the symbol of national sovereignty, and in a manner that respects the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic and its independence, in accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned resolution, which do not authorize anyone to take unilateral action against any State.

At the Geneva conference, the Syrian Government emphasized the importance of prioritizing counter-terrorism and achieving national reconciliation in order to arrive at a political solution under Syrian leadership. The Security Council must help Syria restore security by calling on the international community to stop interfering in internal Syrian affairs and focus on countering and suppressing terrorism and the financing thereof. The Council's unanimous position with regard to counter-terrorism, as set out in resolution 2170 (2014), confirms the soundness of Syria's call that serious efforts should be made to root out terrorism and halt the funding, arming, training, sheltering and smuggling of terrorists.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 70 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative
of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations